GRAFTS AND HYBRIDS

(Copy of letter written by Professor S. C. Harland to Gardener's Cronicle - Vol. 57 No. 18 May 1965)

For various reasons the plant breeder often wants to make hybrids between different species in the same genus or even between members of different genera. Much useless labour can be saved by first trying to graft the two species which it is proposed to cross. If successful grafting is possible there is a chance of successful crossing. If grafting is not possible it is almost certainly useless to attempt crossing. An illustration of this principle may be given.

Many attempts have been made to cross *Hibiscus syriacus* with *Hibiscus rosa sinensis* with the object of extending the range of colours in the latter species, and also to extend the climatic range since *H. syriacus* will mature seeds in England. A successful cross is said to have been made in Florida. The writer has made numerous attempts to bud *H. rosa sinsnsis* on to an *H. syriacus* stock. All were complete failures except one. In a single case union was effected, but after several months only two tiny leaves developed. There is no indication that further growth will ever take place, even though all growing points on the stock have been eliminated. It looks as if these two species are not related biochemically, and that a successful crossing is not possible.

According to information received from Dr. John Popenoe, Director of the Fairchild Tropical Gardens in Miami, Florida, successful crosses have been made. He states, "Crosses have indeed been made between *H. rosa-sinensis* and *H. syriacus*. One of the best of these is the variety *Margarite*. In general the hybrids are low in vigour and may have all been sterile." Unfortunately it has not been possible to obtain further information about these hybrids. A large number of attempts at crossing have been made by the writer with no success. The question of crossability between the two species must therefore remain open.

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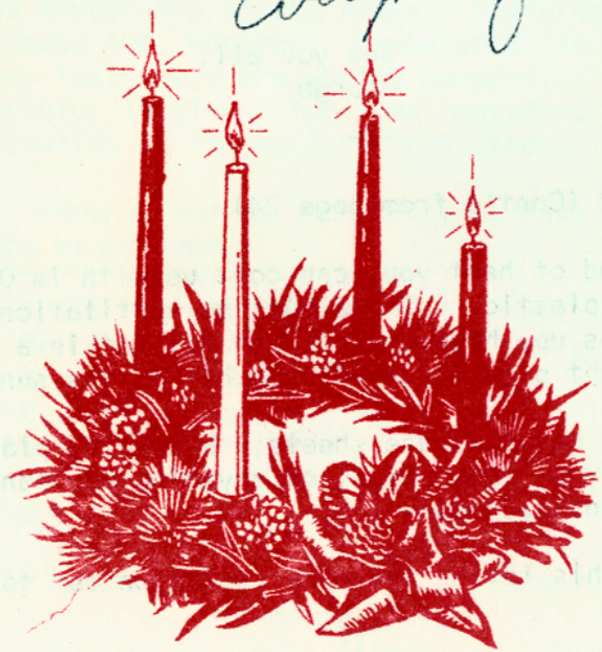
Seasons Greetings

As the time draws near to celebrate the birthday of Jesus, let us pause from our busy pace to be thankful for his birth. There are many things taking place today that we do not understand. We can be sure, however, that had there been no Christmas, things would be much worse. Let us never forget that it is through Jesus Christ that we can hope for "Peace on Earth and Goodwill Toward Men."

Evelyn and I have enjoyed the fine fellowship and hospitality you all have shared with us this past year. We hope for you and all of your loved ones the very Merriest of Christmases and the best of all years during the New Year.

Sincerely,

Evelyn + Jammie